

The public life of athletes' pets **6**

Prep for your Saved by the Max trip **12**

Wednesday

JULY 20, 2016

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A Chicago Tribune
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LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE



Coming up *Kweku*

**EVANSTON RAPPER
KWEKU COLLINS IS PAVING
HIS OWN WAY TO SUCCESS 8-9**



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U.S. PIZZA MUSEUM INSTALLATION LAUNCH PARTY

The Whistler 2421 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-227-3530
Check out an exhibit on pizza's role in pop culture, which will be on display at the Logan Square restaurant through Sept. 18, while snacking on free pizza from Father & Son Restaurant and listening to music from Chicago rapper ShowYouSuck and DJ Charlie Coffeen. 6 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover.



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Arami 1829 W. Chicago Ave. 312-243-1535

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1970 W. Montrose Ave.
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The Ravenswood bar taps eight fruity beers including New Belgium Tart Lychee sour ale and Ballast Point Mango Even Keel session IPA (\$6-\$8) for this bash in its rooftop garden. 5 p.m. No cover.

DO

FREE SIX POINTS READING SERIES Innertown Pub

1935 W. Thomas St. 773-235-9795
Louder Than A Bomb founder Kevin Coval and "My Only Wife" author Jac Jemc perform at the Poetry Center of Chicago's monthly curated reading series. 7 p.m.



STORIES FROM THE SOIL

Uncommon Ground
1401 W. Devon Ave. 773-549-1336

Chicago storytellers share tales of food, family and culture at a benefit for Growing Home urban farm that kicks off with appetizers and Greenstar Brewing beer on the Rogers Park restaurant's rooftop. 6-8:30 p.m. \$30. Tickets: growinghomeinc.org

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BOOKS & BEERS

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY TARGETS
MILLENNIALS WITH PARTIES, BEER EVENTS

By Alison Bowen | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A hum of conversation convened recently at Revolution Brewery around wooden tables clustered with empty beer cups.

Clad in flannel and pendant necklaces, the diverse crowd of young people wasn't present solely for hops—more to learn which hibiscus ale paired best with George Saunders.

The event, on a warm summer evening backdropped by an American flag and beer barrels, was hosted by the Junior Board of the Chicago Public Library Foundation, a group targeted at Millennials.

Its members, 50 young professionals in Chicago, are convinced that city libraries are vital—and vibrant. And they think other 20- and 30-somethings should agree.

Junior Board member Nikki Kidd, 34, learned about the group at a happy hour devoted to "The Warmth of Other Suns," the library's One Book, One Chicago pick in 2014.

An Uptown resident who owns her own public relations business, she was told the Junior Board was for people invested in free and open access to knowledge—and for planning

fun events surrounding arts, culture and social topics.

"This sounds just like me," she thought.

The board's hosting resume includes everything from a "Get Carded" campaign (not the by-the-bouncer kind, the plastic-library type) to an annual Night in the Stacks (cplfoundation.org).

Upcoming events include a trivia night in August.

The festivities do not look like other fundraisers. The crowd is young—and dancing.

"It's not a silent auction," Kidd said. "We run out of alcohol sometimes."

The Junior Board's role also helps identify folks who might serve as the next generation of library support, said Veronica Brown, the Library Foundation's director of individual giving.

Even if the Millennial generation might be screen-obsessed, she noted, many remember their first library card.

"I think everyone has a fond memory, nostalgic memory," she said.

The Board, which formed in 2012, boasts all kinds of professions—lawyers, accountants, entrepreneurs, a personal shopper. All

"It's not a silent auction. We run out of alcohol sometimes."

—Nikki Kidd, 34, a Junior Board member of the Chicago Public Library Foundation

members are between ages 21 and 40. The group considers new members twice a year, and some, like Kidd, first get involved through the Junior Board Society, which isn't limited to 50 people and recruits people in their 20s and 30s to participate in and promote events.

Along with increasing library-coolness awareness, they also raise money, both individually (annual dues are \$250) and through events such as Books+Beer.

Kidd likes to surprise people with a list of library offerings: fishing poles, wireless hot spots, lending robots. She points out that no other institution acts as a community center all over the city.

"The library touches everyone," she said. At the Revolution Books+Beer event,

bartenders poured flights of beers to pair with highlighted books.

"Very Harry Potter like," said Rachel Yeomans while introducing a beer—Coup D'Etat saison ale—to pair with Haruki Murakami's "A Wild Sheep Chase."

"All of his novels have a really strong moral compass," she said.

Yeomans is creator and host of Lit With a Twist ("Literature and libations. Paired."). Many times, it was unclear whether attendees were discussing beer or books.

"It flows very smoothly," Yeomans said—but was this about Diane Setterfield's "The Thirteenth Tale" or Ideology extra special bitter?

Later, she announced a special guest: Markisan Naso, sipping beer at the head of a table.

"The author is here drinking amongst us," Yeomans said to applause.

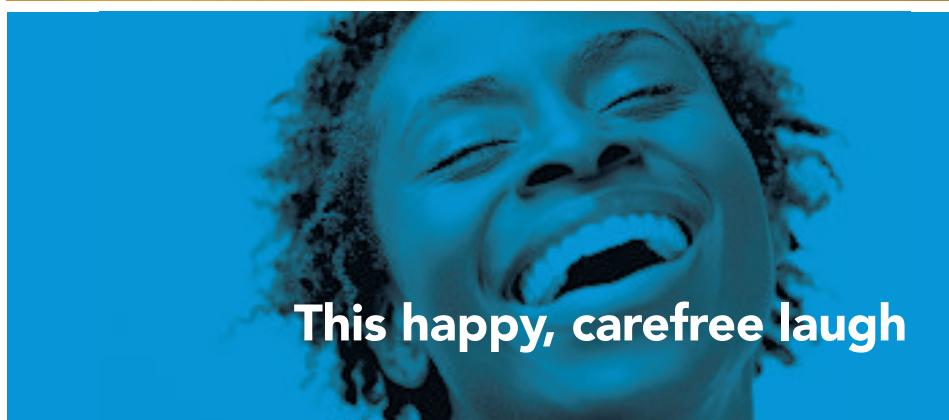
Naso is co-creator for the dinosaur-dominant comic series "Voracious," about a former chef who travels to a prehistoric period. He says he was entertained by the pairing — A Little Crazy Belgian American pale ale.

"I liked the surprise," he said.

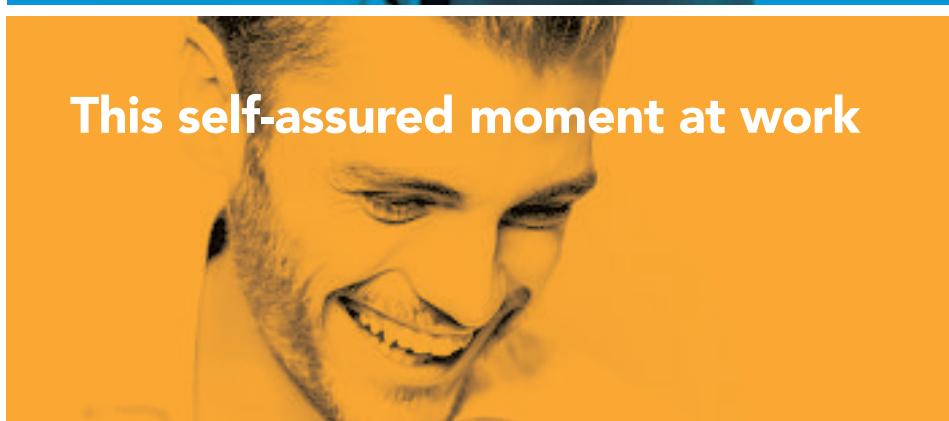




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Elu blends tech, style to give plus-sized women options

By Cheryl V. Jackson

FOR BLUE SKY INNOVATION

A Chicago entrepreneur is out to give plus-sized women more options for fashionable customized clothing—and she's got a techy twist.

Christina Marshall-Valdez's online made-to-measure apparel brand, Elu, uses nine different measurements to customize dresses around the features women want to play up or down. Users can pick their necklines, sleeves and hem lengths.

"It's me trying to answer this really big pain point in plus-size fashion," she said. "It allows them to celebrate parts of their bodies they really love, and de-emphasize the things they feel a little self-conscious about."

The company is starting with three black dress styles at about \$300 each, but plans to offer choices in colors, fabrics and embellishments, in addition to branching into other clothing items.

The orders are completed and shipped in three to four weeks, Marshall-Valdez said. Elu pays for any alterations needed after the fact.

Elu uses an algorithm that will suggest styles. Soon, they plan to launch technology that will allow shoppers to virtually try on their creations, Marshall-Valdez said.

The 33-year-old founder was the senior associate brand manager for Kraft's Blue Box Macaroni and Cheese during the product's high-profile ditching of preservatives, artificial colors and flavors. She said she's using money from a company buyout to finance her longtime entrepreneurial dream.

Marshall-Valdez is an alumna of the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, and a member of the WiSTEM program at 1871. She said she worked with a design consultant to create the line.

A size 26, Marshall-Valdez said she'd often skip social events because she couldn't find

"There are all these full-figured women who still are marginalized by retailers. There are 70 million of us and we can't get more options?"

— Christina Marshall-Valdez, Elu

anything to wear. Even when she would find a nice dress for an outing, she'd find other plus-sized women there wearing the same thing.

"There are all these full-figured women who still are marginalized by retailers," she said. "There are 70 million of us and we can't get more options?"

U.S. sales of women's plus-size apparel increased 3 percent in the 12 months ending February 2016 to \$20.4 billion, according to the NPD Group Inc. That compares to a 2 percent increase for women's total apparel sales as a whole, to \$120.3 billion.

Being fashionable and stylish is important to plus-size shoppers, particularly those 18 to 44, according to a June 2015 Mintel report.

"Many shoppers will settle for what's available and what fits, but want more choices and styles," the report said.

And many are ready to make online purchases.

Half of women who typically wear clothing size 14 or larger tend to frequent the same few retailers. Once they have confidence the clothes will fit, they are likely to turn to shopping online to avoid having to discuss their body size or to try on clothes in-store, the report said.

Marshall-Valdez launched a Kickstarter campaign, and Elu is taking preorders for planned fulfillment in September.

CHERYL V. JACKSON IS A FREELANCE WRITER.



Story courtesy of Chicago Tribune's Blue Sky Innovation, featuring news, analysis and events related to innovation, entrepreneurship and the next Big Idea.



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A SIB OF THE TRIB

RedEye, a Chicago Tribune publication, is published five days a week, except on certain holidays. Unsolicited manuscripts, articles, letters and pictures sent to the Chicago Tribune are sent at the owner's risk.

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sports



Chicago Sky player Elena Delle Donne and her Great Dane, Wrigley

ANTHONY SOUFFLE/TRIBUNE FILE

SPORTY SIDEKICKS

PETS OF CHICAGO ATHLETES LIVE NOT-SO-SECRET LIVES

By Phil Thompson | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Dioner Navarro doesn't have to go to a movie to imagine what secret lives pets are living, he's practically living in a zoo himself. The White Sox catcher could cast his own version of "The Secret Life of Pets" with the exotic animals running around his home in Tampa, Fla.

Come to think of it, many of the pets of Chicago's athletes could be stars in their own right. The Fire's Jonathan Campbell's dog Leo can play soccer. Bears quarterback Jay Cutler and wife Kristin Cavallari once took their Yorkie and Maltipoo to a dog psychic. Sky forward Elena Delle Donne's Great Dane Wrigley has his own Instagram page and won Complex magazine's Beast Wars: March

Madness for Athlete Pets.

But who can top Navarro?

He and his family have a French bulldog, a Persian cat, a chinchilla, a Nigerian Uromastyx (that's a kind of lizard)—did we leave out the miniature pig? Can't forget about Sassy, a gift to his wife, Sherley.

"Valentine's Day was coming up, and I was like, babe, we've been together 15 years, I'm running out of ideas. I got nothing. She goes, 'You know what? I know what I want,'" Navarro said.

They hopped in the car and drove an hour and a half to meet a miniature pig breeder. "[Navarro's wife] was like, 'This is what I want.' You want a miniature pig for Valentine's

Day? She's like, 'Yeah, that's what I want. So we end up buying a miniature pig. [Sassy] has been with us since February 14."

Navarro didn't have much room growing up in a two-bedroom apartment in crowded Caracas, Venezuela, with his parents and brother, so pets weren't an option until later in life. Sherley, on the other hand, grew up on a farm in Puerto Rico where they raised pigs, goats and rabbits.

"So when I first met her, I didn't know what was her take on pets, and then we end up buying a dog. And from a dog we end up buying two cats and a whole bunch of weird stuff. We got a whole bunch of lizards," he said. "She just loves being around animals. It's crazy what she looks forward every day, to be with them."

Navarro's current roster includes:

- » Shaggy, a French bulldog
- » Marichuy, a Persian cat
- » Spike, a Nigerian Uromastyx lizard
- » Prince "Something" (at the time, Navarro couldn't remember), a bearded dragon
- » Gabby, a chinchilla
- » Sassy, a micro pig—"She's really energetic. If she ain't doing nothing, something's wrong."
- » Molly, a Major Mitchell's cockatoo—"We paid \$5,500 for her."

Past pets have included:

- » M'Lady, an Argentine tegu lizard
- » Jeffery, a chameleon
- » Princess Daisy, a ball python—"She escaped.... I know she found her way to a better place."

Add to all this the Navarros' three children and two of Sherley's nephews who have been living with them for five years, and you have a full house (in fact, Navarro said he's building a bigger home). The kids do help take care of the pets. Still, Navarro finds himself making trips to the pet store twice a week at times, not to mention visits to veterinarians.

Most of the time, Navarro doesn't even get to enjoy the animals' company, since, as a baseball player, he's on the road or in spring training a good chunk of the year. When he is home, he gets growled at by his dog when he tries to get in bed with his wife.

"That's the battle I get almost every night," Navarro said. "He's really intelligent, he knows what he's doing. When my wife is not around, obviously, I'm the to-go guy, but when my wife is around—forget about it—nobody wants to know about me."

"Seems to be like that with all the animals in my house. She is the boss and they know it."

Several local players shared their favorite stories about their animal companions.

Brett Lawrie

White Sox second baseman, and Maui, a German shepherd

Lawrie got the now-1-year-old before spring training last year because he's a fan of the breed and he and his wife, Dana, like larger dogs in general. "I'm not just going to get a little lap dog just for a lap dog. I don't like those dogs. I like big dogs, I like dogs that hunt and stuff that are kind of like me."

Jonathan Campbell

Fire defender, and Leonidas, an Australian shepherd

Campbell tried and failed to teach a 1/2-year-old Leo how to open a refrigerator so the dog could fetch bottles of water while Campbell stayed put on the couch. "Pure laziness," he said. Leo has a natural talent for soccer, though. "He's probably the best defender in the league right now. He doesn't kick it as much, but he's actually decently good at trapping it," sometimes trying to bite the ball and other times using his paws to bring the ball down. "Since I'm a defender, [Leo] teaches me to give some good fakes before I make a pass. ... He's a good little trainer."

Jon Lester

Cubs pitcher, and Molly Gauge, a black lab, and Ruger, a French bulldog

Lester and his wife, Farrah, got Ruger, now 9 weeks old, three weeks ago because the family wanted a puppy that wouldn't be overbearing and some friends recommended the breed. "The bulldog likes to chew on the lab's tail. That's not going too well," Lester said during his NVRQT charity night for pediatric cancer. Molly's mellow—" [Lester's son Walker] thinks she's a horse." But Ruger "did bite Walker's ear the other night. ... He cried a little bit, but then



Dioner Navarro's
miniature pig, Sassy



Brett Lawrie and his dog
Maui, a German shepherd

we put a Band-Aid on it and he was fine."

Elena Delle Donne

Sky guard-forward, and Wrigley, a Great Dane. As Delle Donne's fame has grown, so has Wrigley's. He gets name-dropped a lot in publications and online. "My dog is so big that people call his height out before mine, so I think we work really well together," she said recently via New York magazine's The Cut. Delle Donne also talked him up in a teaser video about the "Secret Life" movie for USA Basketball. Oh, and Wrigley lists a sports agent on his Instagram. It's Delle Donne's agent, but still.

Sean Johnson

Fire goalkeeper, and Neo and Sky, two short-haired cats

Johnson, who had cats as a child, adopted them from Chicago Cat Rescue. When he was 5, he had two rabbits, "both named Precious." He just learned last year that when the black-and-white rabbit died, his parents replaced it with an all-black one. "Oh, Precious just had a change of color."

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PULLING UP

AFTER YEARS OF MAKING MUSIC, KWEKU COLLINS IS HAVING HIS BREAKOUT YEAR

By Josh Terry | REDEYE

LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE PHOTOS

Kweku Collins is always creating.

Even though the Evanston rapper is only 19 years old, he's already amassed a sizable discography with several mixtapes and his most recent full-length project, "Nat Love," one of the year's best efforts that has already received high praise from outlets such as Pitchfork, Stereogum, Pigeons and Planes and more.

"Just every day after school, I would go home, get on GarageBand and that's what I'd do. Even now, every night after I go to bed, I flip the laptop open and work on music," explains the thoughtful Collins at a Pilsen photostudio for his RedEye interview. "Now that I don't have school, I can be home every day and make a song. This is all I do—just escape."

Throughout his life, Collins has been primed for this path. "Music was just always there. My first memories were being a little guy and playing drums at the house. It was before I could even get my head up to edge of it," he says. Collins was born in upstate New York to a musical family—his father was a drummer who had a background in jazz and African percussion, while his mother was a dancer at SUNY Brockport. He remembers, "I was born into this [bleep]. I was born into a house where drums were 90 percent of tiny little space we had in upstate New York." When he was 4, those drums followed the family on the move to their new home in Evanston. "When people think of Evanston in Chicago, they think of the north side of it—they think of Northwestern, where my neighborhood was much more diverse and had a mix of everything," he says.

After discovering Kanye West at a young age, Collins later decided to start rapping around eighth grade. "I realized that this is what I really wanted to do around freshman year of high school. At that point, I was like, 'If music doesn't work out I'm gonna go to college.'" Making that decision so early in his high school career proved to be good for his creativity but not his focus. "On the social side, Evanston Township High School was great, but I wasn't the best student. I was raised to be a musician to be so ingrained into my passion. If you love anything, everything is going to pale in comparison—school was just one of those things," Collins explains. His early recordings, while largely scrubbed from the internet, were directly inspired by Lil Wayne. "Back from eighth grade was a lot of Lil Wayne kind of stuff. To me, he was the best rapper alive. I did some weird Auto-Tune-y kind stuff. My dad just dug one up, and it's super embarrassing."

In high school, he recorded under a variety of monikers including Ell Purps, based off the nearby Purple Line, and Black Belief, which featured some super-sunny pop-rap songs. He also got involved with Louder Than a Bomb,

thanks to a passion for poetry that came from his mother. But it wasn't until he started recording under his own name that things really clicked. "[Performing with my name] just felt a lot more authentic, like I was finally ready to really tell my story," he says.

While Collins was still in high school, Chicago hip-hop blog Elevator found his 2014 mixtape "The Valley." From there, it bubbled up on national outlets like Pigeons and Planes. "This kind of freed me up. My music was on blogs and was reaching more people, so it was like, 'What do I do now?'" and [Chicago label] Closed Sessions was the first entity I wanted to align myself with," Collins remembers. He emailed his "Worlds Away" EP to label founders Alexander Fruehter and Michael Kolar in January 2015, and the rest was history. Fruehter told the Chicago Reader, "I just remember sitting there—like, 'Damn, this is dope.'" They signed him in March and announced his addition with single "Start a Fire," a song that served as his big introduction to the Chicago music scene: "You know that I got something to prove>Show the city I ain't nothing to [bleep] with," he snarls on the track.

That summer, Closed Sessions put out his "Say It Here, While It's Safe" EP, leading to more buzz in anticipation of "Nat Love," his debut full-length on a label. The name "Nat Love" comes from a 19th century cowboy who went by the name Deadwood Dick. Collins explains, "In history class you learn a lot about white people, so it was really cool finding this black cowboy. Just seeing such a strong figure at the time he did it was so inspiring to me. The name really stuck with me."

For Collins, project titles are a major source of inspiration. "I'll come up with something, write it down and then all these storylines will appear in my head," he says.

"I recorded the majority of 'Nat Love' in my bedroom and produced all of it there," Collins notes. Out of the project's 11 incredible tracks, which feature earworm, swaggering jams ("Stupid Rose" and "Everever (Oasis)") as well as subdued thought-provokers (the piano-led "Nat's Intro" and repurposed older song "The Outsiders"), he co-produced or produced to, with labelmate Oddcouple getting top billing on "Death of a Salesman." "I mean, it's weird for me to work with other people because I'm used to doing everything myself, and when I have a specific idea in my head, I can do it because it's in my head," Collins explains. "It's

easier to do some [bleep] yourself if you know how to do it than to delegate it to somebody else in and try to direct their vision."

That said, the two major vocal collaborations on the project, Taylor Bennett on "Vanilla Skies" and Jamila Woods on highlight "Ego Killed Romance," both happened organically. Collins says of the latter, "That first verse on that song was all it was for a while. It's perfect because Jamila Woods is one of my favorite artists for so long—back to the Milo and Otis days. She did her part on the track so quick, and it came out amazing."

Just as he had to get out of his comfort zone to be a team player, he also had to get out of his own head. "Ghost," the project's



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most claustrophobic track, came out of an intense bout of writer's block as he was near the album's completion: "I had it for like two weeks before the project came out. I had a day to make a new song. I woke up and hadn't left my house in three days. It was dark and dank and dusty in my room," Collins says of the pressure. He had to act: "I backed myself into this corner and then just pushed as hard as I could and 'Ghost' came out," he says, before joking, "It sounds like I pooped it."

After this release, Collins is feeling the pressure, but not because of the success of other Chicago artists like Chance the Rapper, Jamila Woods, Joey Purp and Vic Mensa. "I'm not a Chicago artist because I'm not from

music



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That summer, Closed Sessions put out his "Say It Here, While It's Safe" EP, leading to more buzz in anticipation of "Nat Love," his debut full-length on a label. The name "Nat Love" comes from a 19th century cowboy who went by the name Deadwood Dick. Collins explains, "In history class you learn a lot about white people, so it was really cool finding this black cowboy. Just seeing such a strong figure at the time he did it was so inspiring to me. The name really stuck with me."

For Collins, project titles are a major source of inspiration. "I'll come up with something, write it down and then all these storylines will appear in my head," he says.

"I recorded the majority of 'Nat Love' in my bedroom and produced all of it there," Collins notes. Out of the project's 11 incredible tracks, which feature earworm, swaggering jams ("Stupid Rose" and "Everever (Oasis)") as well as subdued thought-provokers (the piano-led "Nat's Intro" and repurposed older song "The Outsiders"), he co-produced or produced to, with labelmate Oddcouple getting top billing on "Death of a Salesman." "I mean, it's weird for me to work with other people because I'm used to doing everything myself, and when I have a specific idea in my head, I can do it because it's in my head," Collins explains. "It's

easier to do some [bleep] yourself if you know how to do it than to delegate it to somebody else in and try to direct their vision."

That said, the two major vocal collaborations on the project, Taylor Bennett on "Vanilla Skies" and Jamila Woods on highlight "Ego Killed Romance," both happened organically. Collins says of the latter, "That first verse on that song was all it was for a while. It's perfect because Jamila Woods is one of my favorite artists for so long—back to the Milo and Otis days. She did her part on the track so quick, and it came out amazing."

Just as he had to get out of his comfort zone to be a team player, he also had to get out of his own head. "Ghost," the project's

most claustrophobic track, came out of an intense bout of writer's block as he was near the album's completion: "I had it for like two weeks before the project came out. I had a day to make a new song. I woke up and hadn't left my house in three days. It was dark and dank and dusty in my room," Collins says of the pressure. He had to act: "I backed myself into this corner and then just pushed as hard as I could and 'Ghost' came out," he says, before joking, "It sounds like I pooped it."

After this release, Collins is feeling the pressure, but not because of the success of other Chicago artists like Chance the Rapper, Jamila Woods, Joey Purp and Vic Mensa. "I'm not a Chicago artist because I'm not from Chicago," Collins laughs, before adding, "but, sonically, my music really doesn't belong anywhere. That's the great thing about Chicago is that everyone is so different and everyone is so talented." He continues, "Thematically too, because there are elements of what's happening in Chicago that are happening in my neighborhood. Everybody goes through variations of the same [bleep] everywhere." Sitting just north of the city, he's more than ready to make his mark. He laughs it off: "I'm like their next-door neighbor. I know the kids over there, but now they're letting me into their house, so I gotta figure out where the living room and the bathroom's at, you know?"

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AP FILE

ON SALE 10 A.M. FRIDAY

***Golden, Kelechi, Ric Wilson**, Friday, Aug. 26 (\$12-\$14, 18+ at Double Door).

Joshua Radin, Good Old War, Tuesday, Nov. 3 (\$27-\$47, all ages) at Thalia Hall.

***Joyce Manor, The Hotelier, Crying**, Saturday, Oct. 15 (\$19-\$21, all ages) at Metro.

Poi Dog Pondering, Friday, Oct. 21, and Saturday, Oct. 22 (\$35, 18+) at Vic Theatre.

ON SALE 11 A.M. FRIDAY
***Lucero**, Friday, Oct. 28

(\$25-\$37, 17+) at Thalia Hall.

Passenger, Friday, March 17 (\$30, all ages) at Riviera Theatre.

ON SALE NOON FRIDAY
Adia Victoria, Tuesday, Sept. 20 (\$5, 21+) at Schubas.

The Ballroom Thieves, Maggie Koerner, Saturday, Oct. 8 (\$12-\$14, 21+) at Schubas.

Chris Trapper, Saturday, Sept. 24 (\$18-\$20, 21+) at Schubas.

Gavin James, Thursday, Nov. 17 (\$16, all ages) at Subterranean.

ON SALE 10 A.M. SATURDAY

Brian Wilson, Saturday, Oct. 1 (\$38.50-\$153.50, all ages) at Chicago Theatre.

ON SALE NOON MONDAY

Rebelution, Hirie, Saturday, Nov. 12 (\$25, 18+) at Riviera Theatre.

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***Whitney**, Saturday, Dec. 3 (\$15-\$210, 17+) at Thalia Hall.

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Fullerton Stage

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- 3:00 PM - Howl at the Moon
- 5:30 PM - Future Thieves
- 7:00 PM - Hank & Cupcakes
- 8:00 PM - 7th Heaven

SUNDAY

Main Stage	Fullerton Stage
6:15 PM - Bright Light Social Hour	12:15 PM - The Flat Cats
8:15 PM - The Mowgli's	1:45 PM - Girl Power Night Band
•	3:15 PM - One Night Band
•	5:15 PM - Catfight
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eat&drink

8 ways to make the most of your *Saved by the Max* reservation

By Heather Schroering and Morgan Olsen | REDEYE

Gather 'round, preppies. We bring good tidings from the land of *Saved by the Max*, that "Saved by the Bell"-themed pop-up diner in Wicker Park you may have heard about by now. Armed with a 10 p.m. reservation on a Monday night (yeah, it hurt a little), we prepared to be transported back in time to our favorite '90s sitcom. Two hours and three courses later, we forklifted ourselves out of the restaurant and back into 2016, where everything felt a little brighter. Perhaps it was the neon lighting, but we'll take it where we can get it.

Saved by the Max is a nearly flawless dining experience, but there are a few things you gotta know before you go to optimize your tummy space and Instagram opportunities. Here are the eight things you must do before, during and after your reservation.



Prep with episodes of 'Saved by the Bell'

This is a must to understand the crazy accurate interior design happening at *Saved by the Max*. From the neon pink signs and colorful booth seating to the glass-tiled windows and '90s-tastic spiky cutouts on the walls, the Wicker Park restaurant could easily pass as the sitcom's diner set. Lucky for you, the hit show is available on Netflix for easy binging.



Fast for at least five days before your reservation

Ticket holders are in store for a three-course mega meal that includes one appetizer, entree and dessert per person. And the kitchen, led by former Schwa chef de cuisine Brian Fisher, doesn't skimp on portions. Nothing short of a five-day juice cleanse will allow you to join the Clean Plate Club here, but going light on lunch and resisting snacks before your reservation will help, too.



Get in character

Big hair, don't care. Now is your chance to bring back that zigzag windbreaker ... or buy the one of your dreams. Spandex, crop tops, high tops, acid-washed denim jackets—it's all welcome at The Max. (Plus, recent trending fashion allows you to play a fun game of "costume or nah?")



Scope Mr. Belding's office

If you're lucky, you'll get the table for four in Principal Belding's office, complete with wood paneling, a report card file cabinet and a framed photo of his child's birth. If not, you can still creep around diners to get a good look. Dennis Haskins, who played Mr. Belding, hosted a sold-out event last Sunday to kick off the return of brunch service.



Mac & Screech

Order strategically

This meal requires some teamwork if you're going with a group. The waitstaff asks that you place your entire order up front, so discuss the menu with dining mates to ensure that everyone orders something different. While seasonal veggies as an appetizer or side might sound boring, they were a welcome break from the deliciously greasy diner fare. By the time we finished our meals, we were too full to make a dent in dessert, but we recommend coming to a collective decision on one or two ice cream treats to share amongst the table (you can't go wrong with Max's Magical Sweet Tooth with blueberry muffin ice cream, candied lemon, whipped creme fraiche, blueberry jam and maple syrup). The Hey, Hey, Hey pie of the day from Bang Bang Pie Shop and Miss Bliss' candied bacon are good doggie bag options, too.

**Don't pass on Tori's Fried Chicken**

Undoubtedly the best menu option available, be sure someone at your table commits to this Korean fried chicken atop a waffle made with Goose Island 312 and coconut milk and drizzled with spiced maple syrup.



Cream for a Day

Pace yourself

Portion control isn't a factor here, so proceed with caution. We went H.A.M. on appetizers and lost steam halfway through our entrees. By the time dessert was served, we were all in our third trimester of food baby pregnancy. Nibble at appetizers, splurge on those entrees and save room for dessert.



The diner is filled with '90s-tastic backdrops dripping with Instagram likes, so don't be shy now. After the check is signed, use your last few moments to snap photos at the payphone, locker wall and jukebox. Planning group poses is also strongly encouraged.

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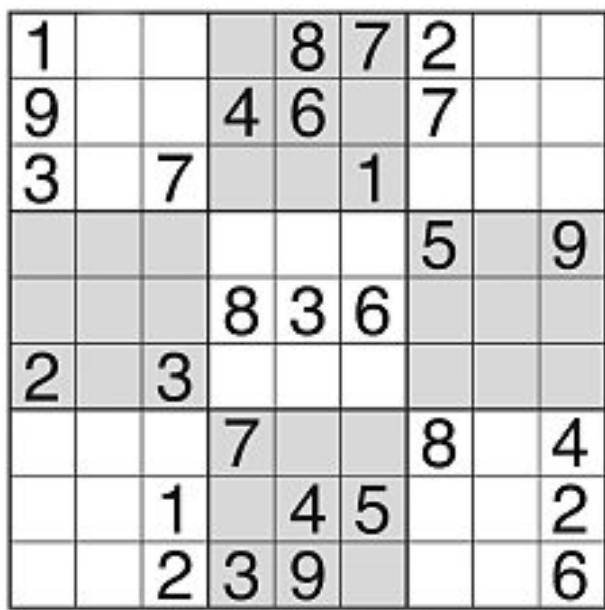
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TODAY'S CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

» Actress Julianne Hough, 28

» Actor John Francis Daley, 31

» Model Gisele Bundchen, 36

» Actor Omar Epps, 43

» Actress Sandra Oh, 45

» Actor Josh Holloway, 47

» Actress Judy Greer, 41

» Guitarist Carlos Santana, 69

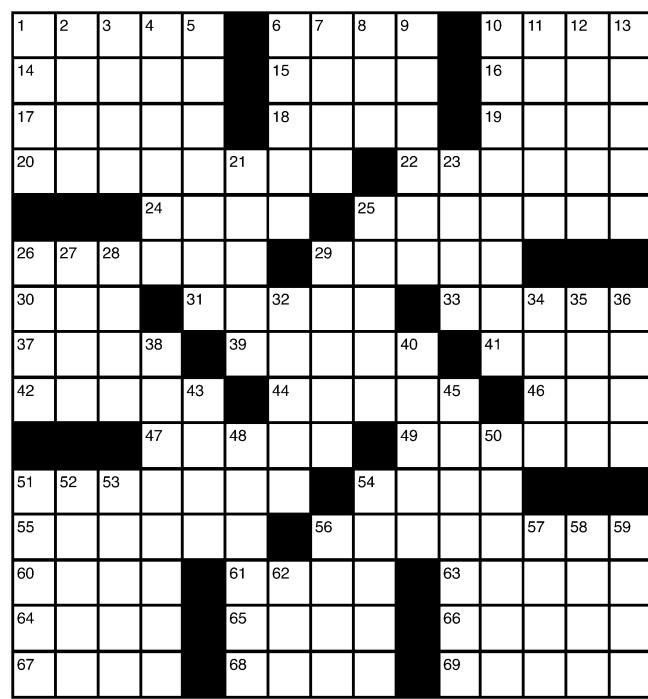
» Actress Diana Rigg, 78

ACROSS

1 Skillful
6 Goes on stage
10 Horse's neck hair
14 Whale's lunch?
15 Have a snack
16 Scent
17 Agassi of tennis
18 Acacia or laurel
19 Hideaway
20 Hold back
22 Go by, as time
24 Huge flightless birds
25 Reached a peak
26 Le Bleu; cooking school
29 Suffers defeat
30 Tumor suffix
31 Play a ukulele
33 Chairs & pews
37 Tourette's symptoms
39 Blisters & boils
41 Undergarment
42 Water vapor
44 on quit berating
46 Black or Bering
47 Potlucks, e.g.
49 Zsa Zsa & Eva
51 Window coverings
54 May honoree
55 Boards
56 Rather lilac in color
60 Seep out
61 Barrier built across a river
63 Shun a big wedding
64 up; spuds
65 Singer Fitzgerald
66 Rotating machine part
67 Cruz & Danson
68 Small brook
69 Florida or Iowa

DOWN

1 Not fully closed
2 "Been there, _ that"
3 Says no more
4 Went separate ways
5 Container that keeps a drink hot or cold
6 Those opposed
7 Foot problem
8 Poet Eliot's monogram
9 Light and airy window curtains
10 Thick syrup
11 Modify to fit
12 Clamor
13 Blundered
21 Mom's sisters
23 Spike & Bruce
25 Ajax rival
26 Portable beds
27 Take out
28 Marathon
29 Draws in
32 Items on a bread tray
34 In addition
35 Bleachers level
36 Hot tubs
38 Uniformity
40 Coffee sweetener
43 Humble
45 Diaper brand
48 Respond
50 Voter's paper
51 Pitcher's lip
52 Within reach
53 Bulldozed
54 Wall painting
56 Aspirin or Advil
57 Smidgen
58 Notice
59 Roll call response
62 Whitney or Wallach



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red hot

Royal wedding redux

Pippa Middleton, sister of literal princess Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, is engaged to hedge fund manager James Matthews. The most famous bridesmaid in the world, who nearly stole the show at her sister's 2011 wedding to Prince William, has been dating Matthews on and off since 2012, according to usatoday.com. The two plan to tie the knot in 2017, which gives us about a year to prepare ourselves to see Prince George in a little tux.

GETTY IMAGES FILE

THE QUOTE

“... It was literally like if we were in a movie, the music would start playing and the violins would go ... I think that he for the first time ever took my breath away ... I was like ‘bleep, he’s good-looking.’”

—Mila Kunis, on Howard Stern's radio show, on first seeing her now-husband Ashton Kutcher at the awards show where they ultimately reconnected. Her future baby daddy was fresh off his split from Demi Moore when he and Kunis reunited. The two married in 2015 and have one daughter together, with another baby on the way. Just because Jackie and Kelso didn't end up together on *“That '70s Show”* doesn't mean their real-life love story isn't the cutest damn thing we've ever heard. Sorry, Demi.



Sugar, spice and everything nice

The recently rebooted Cartoon Network show *“The Powerpuff Girls”* is getting a second season, *Vulture* reported, giving us all the nostalgic feels. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup originally aired from 1998 to 2005 and made their return in April of this year. Here's to raising a generation of kids who believe girls can be cute AND kickass. Thanks, Professor.



Down in flames

Lady Gaga and *“Chicago Fire”* actor Taylor Kinney have split, according to people.com. The two called off their engagement earlier this month. *People* reported, citing *TMZ*, and Gaga was spotted in Cabo this weekend without her heart-shaped ring. They were together for four years before getting engaged on Valentine's Day 2015. Is it selfish if we're keeping our fingers crossed for an album out of this?

THE DIGIT

6

That's how many Emmy nominations the first season of Netflix's *“Making a Murderer”* got last week. On Tuesday, Netflix announced that a second season of the documentary series is in the works, according to tvline.com. The upcoming season will follow along as the legal and investigative teams of Steven Avery and his nephew Brendan Dassey challenge their convictions in the 2007 murder of photographer Teresa Halbach.